I and the fate of future generations depends on your ability to establish a set of values and beliefs to guide your choices. It is not by accident that we are called upon to make these choices. The outcome of these choices is not beyond our control. Throughout our lives, we are faced with a rapid change in the world. All of it may be a bit overwhelming as well. I can understand that for many of you, in my room at the Graduate House, I remember feeling a bit overwhelmed myself for what the future might bring.

Little did I know that a few years later, I would be deeply involved in politics, elected to the House of Representatives, likely to have Congress that was divided as violence against my party broke out. A year later, I returned to Boston with my new wife to obtain a graduate degree at MIT. Soon after, my first child, Carolina, was born here at Massachusetts General Hospital, at the same time my friend and young professor Paul Samuelson and his wife had twins. I knew I had to return to Colombia at a time of crisis, but that I also had to inspire everyone that any hardship or crisis could shape your life in public service. I have learned that our lives and careers are shaped by outside forces, often beyond our control. Throughout our lives, we are faced with important choices. In the end, I realized how important it is to establish a set of values and beliefs to guide these choices.

I also realized that a strong foundation in the humanities, economics and technology was the key, for it is through these basic disciplines that we manage change. We use these tools to create the core of social progress. Now there are enormous powerful tools of change rest in your hands and the fate of future generations depends on your ability to put it to good use all that you have learned. Your friends, your family, your professors and I are all confident that each of you can make the difference.

This pace of change, and the rigors of academic life have at times, I'm sure, left you gasping for breath, wondering if the whirl of learning around you will ever slow down.

Today, you can stop and take a breath. Look back on the years you have spent at MIT; look beyond the long hours and hard work. What you have achieved today is a true compliment to all of you, and you should stop and appreciate it. Commit to memory the time you have spent here and what you have done. In the future you will look back on these years as a time of great excitement, of great education, and of great personal growth. Now you are in the position to stand alone, on your own, as the owners of your success and the thrill of academic life. You will look back on these years as a time when life was lived to its fullest, when bonds of friendship were forged, and on how the future was shaped.

But that is not what I have come here to speak about today. I hope my views on this issue are well known by now. Every day, you read about our struggle against narcoterrorism and drug trafficking in Colombia. This struggle will continue when I leave office, for good men and women everywhere will not tolerate the misery and violence bred by those who push and those who consume illegal drugs.

No, today I want you to explore with you a wider vision and the events that will shape a new global order in the 21st century. For all of all day, a day which has such permanent importance and to me of each of you, this is a day to look forward, not to look back to every day. I remember feeling a bit overwhelmed myself for what the future might bring.

Like most of you here, in Colombia we watched on television the wall come down in Berlin with great attentiveness. The People Power in the Philippines to Vazquez Havel's "Velvet Revolution" to the "NO" vote in Chile, demonstrating that on the rise of the globe as totalitarian governments are teetered by people relentless to experience a world of freedoms. For all of us these days to come the era we live, there is no question of a decisive choice. There will be the debilitating fear of being detained, the instant and the liberty, the question of democracy. There is no distance not a distinction at all in Colombia. Indeed, our position in Latin America is somewhat unique. Our constitution is as old as yours, and our academic institutions have been long been a model for our neighbors. This is the true significance of our current struggle, the greatest threat to our democracy is the insidious, but in the unstoppable worldwide demand for drugs which feels it. In the past, we usually saw extremism in the form of the most serious threat to democracy, but now drugs and organized crime are even more dangerous, and are a real threat to our democracy, in the last ten years as well.

This is an auspicious moment to reflect on our changing circumstances and a new global order. Look at what has happened since I graduated from MIT in 1943, a terrible war was raging in Europe and in Asia, and taking lives and destroying our countries at every time. No one can ever forget the tragedy of this war: the 45 million killed, the Nazi death camps, the destruction of towns, cities, of lives and hopes of generations to come, the use of atomic weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Seven years later, when I returned to MIT for postgraduate studies, Europe was still rebuilding the ravages of this war and the Cold War appeared to be a reality that would never leave. Soviets and Americans stood poised, ready to strike each other in what was known as the cold war. But that is not what I have come here to speak about today. I hope my views on this issue are well known by now. Every day, you read about our struggle against narcoterrorism and drug trafficking in Colombia. This struggle will continue when I leave office, for good men and women everywhere will not tolerate the misery and violence bred by those who push and those who consume illegal drugs.

Now it is time to open our eyes to a new world. After years of superpower conflict, we are nolable able to see beyond the East-West confrontation.

In my senior year, in my room at the Graduate House, I remember feeling a bit overwhelmed myself for what the future might bring.

The burden of sustaining a viable planetary environment now rests clearly on the shoulders of the Third World. The future is a frontier of unspoiled lands. The tiny but that has suddenly leaped to the front ranks of world powers. It is a country that gives more economic aid to the Third World than any other nation, including the historically generous United States. The small military establishment of Japan presents no serious threat to the vast armies of the US or Soviet Union, but through its economic growth and technological innovation will be of critical importance, not least military strength. A world where fresh agricultural products will be brought, the world to the frontiers of the national economy.